2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

1. Male and female servants.

People who are short of help in their family take in servants. They ask somebody to find some for them (saying): Find a servant or the like for us somewhere. When they have found some they tell them, saying: At such and such a place I have found that there is one. Then the man who wants a servant, and the one who went to find one, go and bring the young man or the girl, and his or her parents. They give them food and beer; thereupon they talk about the wages, in case of perquisites then of these, in case of money then about this. Male servants get two rupees yearly as wages, and as regards perquisites they will keep for themselves daily one handful of all kinds of agricultural crops, as they are harvested. Servant girls get only one rupee in yearly wages, but as regards harvest perquisites they get the same as male servants. The male servants get a change of clothes for the rainy season, viz., a piece of cloth five cubits long and a loin-strip. When they have worked the full year, they get a loin-cloth, five cubits long and a cotton-shawl of five cubits. At the Sohrae on the day of bathing they get twenty breads; at this time they talk about continuing or leaving. Servant girls get, as a change of clothes for the rainy season, a loin-cloth of three cubits and to carry over the breast and shoulder a piece of cloth, four cubits long. And when they have worked the full year, they get a woman's cloth, ten cubits long, to dress in. 357

The male servant helps the master, and the servant girl helps the master's wife. If there are no servant girls, the male servant will at cock-crow help the master's wife to pound. A male servant, with whose work and doings the master's wife is pleased, lives in great comfort. But if the master's wife is displeased, then however good the master may be, the male servant will have trouble. His food she will give him stingingly, and she will also worry her husband to make him scold the servant. If the master's wife is pleased with the servant, she will not let him be scolded by her husband. If the master's wife has a grown-up daughter, they may sometimes keep a servant also as a house-son-in-law; but only when the master's wife is pleased; it does not happen because the master says so. If the master's wife is always good, servant girls have great comfort, otherwise they get no end of trouble.

If they take some boy in, only to tend the cattle, they give such a one one rupee the year, and as clothes a loin-cloth, five cubits long, and a cotton shawl, five cubits long, besides food.

When they engage hired workers during the time of agricultural work, whether they are men or women, they give them breakfast, the noon-meal, for the children one portion rice left-over from last evening, and two seers paddy or Indian corn, as wages. 464 465

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

stock, to the chief presiding deity, *Marañ Buru*, and ancestor-spirits of the family, uttering suitable incantations so that the baby may prosper in life and have no diseases.

The child, if a male one, now receives his name after his grand-father; and if a female, after her grand-mother on the paternal side. Now follows a general drink of rice-beer and a tribal dinner. The midwife, who generally receives a fee of eight annas if the child is a female one, and ten annas and a *baru* (brass-plate) if a male, will now, on her part, invoke *Marañ Buru* and the dead ancestors of the father of the child at the village bathing-ghat, throw the leaf-cup in water, bathe and return home.[1]

Between the third and the fourth year, children of both sexes have their ears bored by their grand-mothers or elderly female relatives by means of a brass-needle. It is a quiet domestic ceremony and no invitations are issued outside.

Caco-Chatiar

The second critical period in the life of the Santal is sought to be guarded by a purificatory ritual called Caco-chatiar. This ceremony may be observed any time before marriage and is in effect, the admission

1 The midwife's fee for the next male child is 8 ans. and 6 ans. for a female.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ
SANTAL PARGANAS

796

Magh Sim[1] *(January-February)*

The month of *Magh* (Jan.-Feb.) is the end of the Santal year and it has got appropriate ceremonials with the cutting of jungle thatching grass. Servants are paid their wages and fresh contracts entered into. All village officials resign, *rayats* notify throwing up of lands and are reappointed amidst drinks of rice-beer[2]

[465]
[675]

Baba, the Santal 'Sal'-Blossom Festival.[3]

796
824

Towards the latter part of February, the Santals celebrate *Baba*, their *sal*-blossom season, an occasion for wholesale tribal rejoicing with sprinkling of water, its special songs and dances.

According to *Hòṛkorèn Mare Hapramko Reak' Katha*, the Traditions and Institutions of the Santals, the aim of the festival is to celebrate the advent of Spring, which sees the efflorescence of their favourite *sal*, (Shorea Robusta), *pòlas* (Butea Frondosa), *mohua* (Bassia latifolia), *icak'* (Woodfordia Floribunda, Salib.) flowers. So long *Baba* is not over, no Santal will suck the honey of these flowers or eat them, nor will their women wear them in their hair.

1 Mayurbhanj Santals name it *Magh-Sim*, meaning a worship in the month of Magh, as distinct from *Mage-Sim* of the Muṇḍàs.

2 Ref. Risley, *People of India*, App. Viii. clxvi.

3 Quoted from the author's article in the *Modern Review*, May 1936.

[113]

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

The organization which binds groups of villages together is loose by comparison with the village system. The Santals distinguish between the various sections of the country in which their villages are situated, calling them *parganas*. Each *pargana* has a distinctive name, which may be either the name of a village situated within its borders or a general name. Over each of the *parganas* a *parganath* is supposed to have jurisdiction. McAlpin's report, the result of an inquiry instituted by the Bengal Government which led to the Tenancy Amendment Act of 1918, in addition to its main purpose of suggesting measures for the protection of Santal lands, dealt also with the condition of the Santal village system. McAlpin reported that the *pargana* system was far gone in decay, and it is not possible to question his conclusion. Binu Hāsdāk' of Tantidanga, late *parganath* of the Sarenga area, was typical of his class. His mind was well stored with the customary law of the tribe, and from time to time he was called in by nearby villages to help more particularly with disputes arising out of marriage tangles. He was personally popular and had some prestige as the possessor of valuable remedies against sickness, but on his own confession his authority was of a very limited kind. "What can I do", he once said, "unless the people of the village are agreed?" There is the crux of the situation; in the village, public opinion is a wellnigh irresistible force. Binu used, nevertheless, to go happily about his errands, for among other advantages which accrued he received a fee amounting to one rupee four annas when a guilty party was fined.

Kinship ties share with the well-knit village system the governance of the Santal's daily life, regulating his relationships with his fellows. The tribe is divided into clans, and each clan is again divided into sub-clans. The clan descends through the father, and when girls marry they are taken into the clans of their husbands. The clans have a totemistic basis and they are exogamous. Land is conceived of as belonging to the clan. Although individual and family ownership is now the rule, Santals will not countenance the transfer of land from one clan to another. The one exception for which allowance is made has been forced on them by economic necessity; it occurs in the case of a man without sons who brings his daughter's husband into his own house to carry on the cultivation, the son-in-law thereby acquiring rights in the property for descendants. The rights conferred by Hindu personal law on daughters in the property of their fathers or on wives in the property of their

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

the tables may be turned on those who lord it over them. In Bodding's collection of the Folk-Tales[1] there are two stories which turn on the fact that the bodies of high-caste strangers house the souls of animals, while the bodies of men of low caste house human and beautiful souls. (The means by which the real person can be discerned is to look at him through the wing feather of a vulture.) In common with other tribes of their group and many primitive peoples in other parts of the world, the Santals refer to themselves as "men" (*hor*). A Santal once said in reply to a direct question as to whether any other race was superior to his: "No, there are no others who are greater than us. You can see that from the fact that even today our womenfolk will not eat rice that has been cooked by Brahmins. Formerly, when our menfolk ate Hindu rice they were made to sleep outside for one night; they could not sleep with their wives. When they brought rice from outside to the house they were made to eat it in the courtyard and clean up the place where they had eaten, and then wash their own eating utensils." Many Santals work as day labourers in the fields of well-to-do caste Hindus and receive payment in grain or sometimes in cooked food. The cooks in the homes of their employers are Brahmins, and so by refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmin they hold themselves aloof from the Hindu social structure. Nevertheless, the complete aloofness of former days has been modified and is maintained only by the women. As one might expect, Santals share with others abhorrence of social customs which do not agree with their own standards of morality, and they exaggerate the iniquities practised by other peoples. The same person said: "When the *Deko* put out their lamps at night they have no sense of what is right and wrong. They respect no one, whether their younger brother's wife, elder brother's wife, their own sister or anyone else. Moreover, they do not respect any of their relations by marriage."

Many of the *Deko* make a living out of the Santal, as the cat finds its sustenance in his home. The analogy is by no means perfect, and its chief value for the Santal is that it ministers to his self-respect. In the Bankura district many of the landlords of the Santals are Sundis, who are themselves classified as an Exterior or Scheduled caste. Their hereditary occupation is the distilling and selling of spirits, and they are usually the lessees of the government liquor and drug shops. They owe their present

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Folk-Tales*, Vol. III, Nos. 74 and 77.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

his courtyard after the midday meal used to make sure of rising at the right time by telling his children to waken him when the shadows had reached a certain spot.

During the night the time is indicated not only by the position of the moon but also by the stars, and particularly by reference to the constellation Pleiades. There are at least two myths relating to the sun and the moon. In the one the sun is male and the moon female, while the stars are their children. The absence of the stars from the sky in daytime is explained by a story that they made a pact to eat their children. The sun carried out the bargain and so there are no stars visible by daylight, but the moon evaded her promise and so some of the children survived. The other version says that both the sun and the moon are male; they became related to each other by marrying each other's sisters. Only a few of the stars and constellations are named. The Pleiades have the same name as one of the clans; the Milky Way is known as the "cow track", and the Great Bear is the "old woman's bed".

Between the harvest and the Spring festival, a period which corresponds with the cold weather, the villages present a deserted appearance, due to the annual migration to the east for work in the harvest fields of the Ganges delta. This seasonal migration, dictated by economic necessity, plays an important part in the life of the area. Farther to the north many Santals work in the coal-mines round Asansol, while to the south labour is drawn to the great steel town of Tatanagar. In this area migration to industrial centres is rare; the Santals regard the conditions in industrial towns as highly dangerous to health, and they affirm that nothing will induce them to go there. The same reason, however, does not prevent them from leaving their own villages in a non-malarious tract of country for the malarious rice-growing areas farther east, in consequence of which the money earned is often more than spent in the expenses of protracted illness and long periods of idleness. Each village organizes its own party of migrants, who go to work for the same masters year after year. The wages they receive are more than double what is paid in their own locality, and so they earn the money required to pay rent, to meet social expenditure for marriages, and to pay off old debts. The homes are left in charge of the aged, and some of the children are left behind. The villages are denuded of able-bodied men and women, apart from a few who do not need to go. Family parties travel together, babies and very young children being carried

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

for their timber. The *sarjom*, which predominates, is a valuable tree, but locally it has not been permitted to grow to any height. The trees are cut once in seven years and the timber is exported chiefly to supply firewood in the towns, while the leaf is used for the leaf plates required in city homes and food shops. This activity provides the main subsidiary occupation and is in full swing whenever work in the fields slackens, though it is not sufficient to keep the Santals at home throughout the year. Women share in the occupation; they help the men by stacking the timber as it is cut into lengths, and they collect the leaves which older women sew together while sitting at home. Other women, in the time they can spare from duties at home, collect the twigs and dry branches which they need for domestic fuel. Boys from about the age of seven are engaged in their occupation of tending the village herd of goats and cattle, for which they receive wages from the owners of one anna per month for each goat and two annas per month for each head of cattle in their charge. They are sometimes joined by the younger girls, but after the girls are nine or ten they stay with their mothers, look after the house or help to nurse the younger children.

Women play little or no part in the organization of social or religious life, but they are supreme in household affairs. Although men lay claim to superior intelligence and women openly disclaim any knowledge or interest in affairs outside the home circle, the attitude of the two groups towards each other is one of good-natured tolerance. In Barikul, at the close of a festival when there had been much drinking, the men were feeling unwell. Babulal reports: "Some of the men are saying: 'Yesterday I had nothing to eat, so give me something today.' To which the women reply: 'We have eaten all the food; you men are drunk!' And so they drank more beer and spirits, and became even more drunken than they had been the day before." In his diary entry for the next day he records: "Today all the drunks have begun to beg for some stale rice gruel. The women scolded them: 'You have earned a lot of food, haven't you? Why should you not go out to beg?'" After this chaffing the women relented and gave the men some food before they set out once more to their work. The Santal wife attends fairs and markets; she buys her own clothes and attends to the household shopping. The contrast between them and their non-Santal neighbours is heightened by the fact that they do not cover their heads. One end of the *sari* is thrown loosely across the breasts and over the left shoulder.

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

a portion of land in recognition of his appointment, and land cannot easily pass out of the possession of a particular clan. The office therefore tends to remain in the family, for fresh lands are not obtainable after one or two generations have passed away.

The villagers recognize the priest's office, as they do those of the other dignitaries, by payment in return for services rendered. When one of the villagers is fined by the council, the priest receives his own share of the total sum. When game is killed in the hunt, the priest's share consists of a strip of flesh cut from the animal's backbone; it is formed into the shape of a cooking-place before it is handed over to him. He receives the heads of all the animals that are sacrificed by him on behalf of his fellow villagers. His duty is to make the offerings to the tribal spirits on behalf of the whole village at the time of the festivals. In order to prepare himself he has to separate himself from his fellows. Santals ordinarily sleep on string beds, but on the night before a sacrifice the priest sleeps on the floor, and he must abstain from sexual intercourse. On the morrow he has to fast until his work is done.

In addition to the priest, there is in every village a co-priest with special functions. This official is known as the *kudam naeke*. The word *kudam* refers to the area behind the dwelling-house. During village festivals, while the priest is making the main offerings, the *kudam naeke* sacrifices to the *pargana boinga*, the spirit who is regarded as the guardian or perhaps as the personification of the wider territorial unit into which groups of Santal villages are formed. It may be that this particular spirit needs the services of the co-priest because the *pargana boinga* was resident in the area before the villagers settled within its borders, while they brought the other spirits with them. The other function fulfilled by the *kudam naeke* reveals ideas which comprise perhaps a separate strata in the complex structure of Santal religion. During the festivals he offers drops of blood, which he produces by pricking his own arm with a thorn, to the boundary spirits, or the spirits of the outskirts of the forests. The name of this blood offering is *bul mayam*, *mayam* being the ordinary word for blood. The meaning of the term *bul* in this context is obscure, and Santals are unable to offer any explanation. *Bul* is a word connoting drunkenness; it can also be used as an adjective to describe an earthen pot that has become saturated with water, and it may refer to the saturation of the rice offering with the blood. In some incantations the phrase is coupled with one that refers to menstrual blood. The same

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

778
793
788 the base of the earthen mound and smeared it with his mixture of cowdung and water. He then took some vermilion paint from a leaf and mixed it with mustard oil in a small brass cup that he had brought for the purpose. This mixture he proceeded to smear on the foreheads of the larger animal effigies, and in doing so he used only the middle finger of his right hand. He then sprinkled some water over the effigies, and followed this by sprinkling some spice, of a variety known as *mithu*.[1] Up to this point all his actions had been performed in complete silence, and he was being watched intently by a small group of people who were waiting to make their offerings. He used the utmost deliberation and completed each part of the proceeding with great reverence. He next took up in his right hand a twig of the *sinjo*[2] tree and passed it in an anti-clockwise direction over the space that had been smeared with cowdung and laid it at the foot of the mound. Then he did an obeisance, bringing his right hand up to his forehead with the fingers lightly clenched, while the fingers of his left hand rested against his right forearm, the customary Santal salutation by an adult to his respected seniors. The process was repeated three times with three separate twigs, and as each twig was moved around he muttered his prayer. When it was over he told me that one had been for *Cando*, one for *Marak Buru*, and one for Lokhon Mañjhi.

782
793 All was then ready for the offerings, of which on that particular day there were three. The first was a pigeon that had been brought by the mother of a sick child. He accepted it from the mother, taking hold of it by his right hand and taking care - he was squatting on the ground--not to turn his back on the shrine. He smeared the head of the pigeon with vermilion and oil, sprinkled it with some of the *mithu*, and then held it to feed on a little parched rice that he had placed on a leaf on the smeared space. He then handed the pigeon back to the woman who had brought it. The same process was repeated with a black hen and a small black goat that belonged to others who had been waiting. As each of them took back the dedicated animals they paid a small money fee to the priest, this varying from one to four pice. He then placed his sacrificial axe on the ground to his left with the sharp edge uppermost. This axe, known as the *tangi*, has a curved blade. He took hold of the pigeon once more and severed its head by passing it swiftly

[465]

[1] *Trigonella Foenum-graecum*, Willd.
[2] The Bengali *Bel*, Aegle Marmelos, *Correa*.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1943 AW42 Santal AW42

783
846

tents of one are sprinkled near the four legs of the string bed in the house, of the second on the breasts of the men, and of the third on the breasts of the women. Then a brew of *nim*[1] leaves and water is brought out. This is very bitter, and the men to whom it is first presented generally make excuses to escape from having to sip it. All the women take some, out of sympathy, as they express it, with the mother, who drinks a cupful. She often continues to drink small quantities for several days, as it is supposed to aid the flow of milk. At this gathering beer is provided for everyone, and if the family can afford to do so they prepare a meal as well.

553

An essential part of the ceremonies is the naming of the child, whereby it acquires a definite status in the village and among the kinsfolk. In the area round Sarenga the naming is sometimes accomplished on a day different from that on which the shaving and bathing take place, and it is the naming ceremony that emphasizes the social obligations of the household. The villagers may bathe on the fifth day and gather at the house for the naming on the seventh day. The midwife receives her payment at the gathering, and she is paid in cloth and rice, receiving also a bangle for cutting the cord. She receives twice as much rice for a boy as for a girl. The name is chosen by the parents of the child and it is announced to the villagers by the midwife. Holding the child in her arms, she says to them if the child is a boy: "From today call him so-and-so when he goes hunting." If the child is a girl she says: "From today call her so-and-so when you call her to draw water." The first-born boy is named after his father's father and the second boy is named after his mother's father. The first girl receives the name of her father's mother and the second girl that of her mother's mother. When these names have been used, children are given the names of uncles and aunts, with a preference on the whole for the father's family. Before the naming the guests ask: "Of what country is this child?" When the name chosen comes from the father's family, the question is answered by giving the name of the father's village, the mother's village being given when the chosen name comes from her relations. If a child cries excessively it may be put down to the fact that it is unhappy over its name. Babulal of Barikul wrote: "Sometimes among us the children sleep happily right from birth and at other times they

759
465

[1] *Melia azadirachta*, L. For its connection with godlings of disease see W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, especially pp. 119 ff., and index.

5: Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

iron bangle on her wrist and iron betel nut crackers in her hand. Then they are led inside the house, where they are set down and fed on a dish of black beans and rice. The bridegroom has to make a show of refusing to eat until the bride's father presents him with a rupee.

The party outside begin to drink beer that is variously named by the different groups. The bride's fellow villagers drink beer "in honour of the guests", while the bridegroom's fellow villagers drink "in honour of the new relations"; the young people are permitted to drink "dew beer" that will help them to avoid the chill they might otherwise contract by dancing and drumming through the whole night. While a feast of goat's meat curry and rice is being prepared the guests sit around and talk and sing. The headmen of the two villages, however, have some work to complete. The presents from the bridegroom's family are handed over by their headman to the bride's headman. These are for the most part clothing. The *boiṅga iṭaṭ'* is a cloth of twelve cubits for the sister of the bride's father. *Iṭaṭ'* is a word that ordinarily means food left over on the plate of one who has eaten; perhaps it is applied to these presents in the sense that they are left over when the bride price has been given and received. The bride's mother receives a cloth of eleven cubits. The grandmothers receive cloths of ten cubits known as the *here iṭaṭ'*, or husks. The bride's father may receive a cow, and her maternal uncle is given a money fee, it is said, instead of a cow. The amount given is small, usually a few annas. The headmen themselves receive a half-rupee each, the *jogmaṅjhi* receives a loin-cloth and the *godet'* one anna, while the anointing maidens receive a half-anna each. In this way the special duties and responsibilities of various parties to the wedding are acknowledged. The bride's maternal grandmother is made to "pay" for her cloth. She does so by presenting five small measures of rice, five sticks of turmeric and five rolled cheroots to the bridegroom's headman, all being wrapped in a bundle together. The bride price that is paid at this time is also paid through the headmen. Many of the presents and fees are known by hidden names. The bride price is called the "milk tree", a term that is also used sometimes for a mother; the fee received by the headmen is known as the "tree of the sacred grove"; the cloth for the bride's mother is called "hot water".[1]

When the feasting is over the bridegroom's party gets ready to leave and the members are escorted to the end of the village street. There once more they sit down and a final beer-drinking

[1] See Chapter 4, p. 48, for other examples connected with marriage.